DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 989 EA 022 699

AUTHOR Barry, Michael; Olson, Arthur
TITLE A Study of Teacher Image: Implications for School Administrators.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Atlanta, GA, November 11-13, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; Administrator Role; Comparative Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Self Esteem; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Improvement; Teacher Morale; *Teachers
IDENTIFIERS Ireland; United States

ABSTRACT

This study describes the mental images conjured up by the word "teacher" in two different cultures asks the following questions: How does the composite rating of the image of teachers compare between countries? and How are teachers rated in comparison to other occupations? Two instruments consisting of a 30-item attitude scale and a ranking of significant occupations were administered to 224 United States and 233 Irish teachers and prospective teachers. Significant differences exist in the way the respective cultures evaluated teaching as measured in the study. In ranking professions, elementary teachers ranked the same in the two samples while secondary teachers ranked higher in Ireland. Extensive tables of results are given. Suggestions to school administrators for improving the image of teachers are included; for example, administrators should know how teaching ranks among other professions and be aware that many teachers feel their profession is not as important as others. A review of literature about the teaching personality, teaching role, and cultural images of teaching in the United States is included. (29 references) (EJS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED328989

A STUDY OF

TEACHER IMAGE:

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Michael Barry
Arthur Olson
Department of Educational Leadership
The University of West Florida

Presented to the Annual Conference of the
Southern Regional Conference on Educational Administration

November 13, 1990

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Michael Barry

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 022 699

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

SUBJECTS 5

INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS 6

CONCLUSIONS 9

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS FOR IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF TEACHERS 8

REVIEW OF LITERATURE 9

The Teaching Role in the United States 10

Cultural Images of teaching in the United States 11

. 13

REFERENCES 14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 16

INTRODUCTION

This study represents an attempt to describe the image(s) conjured in the mind by the word *teacher* in two cultures. The first phase of the study was devoted to a review of the literature in Ireland and in the United States. The questions asked in the study were: (1) How does the composite rating of the image of teachers compare between countries and (2) how are teachers rated in comparison to other occupations in Ireland and in the United States. Images are defined as mental constructs through which people shape and define their concept of teachers.

Most people familiar with American education know of the concern among educators and among the public about the quality of education. In recent years, parents have been expressing greater dissatisfaction with the quality of education in public schools, and some studies have noted a trend towards a decline in the prestige of the teaching profession in the last two decades. One current contemporary teacher portrait is that of a person vulnerable to the ambiguities, decadence, and violence of modern life--a person who is discouraged and burnt-out. There can be little doubt that cultural values have exerted influence on how the teacher's role has been defined. These values not only play a role in defining the teacher's status in society but also are part of the selection process which determines the type of person who decides to become a teacher. For these reasons, cultural values will play an important part in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

Ireland was chosen as the country of worthwhile comparison because of a strong tradition of learning that exists there--Ireland has been historically lauded as the land of saints and scholars. In addition, Ireland's symmetrical cultural base provides a useful counterpoint to the great cultural diversity that exists in the United States.

Ultimately, the study is concerned with the necessity of implementing positive change in public policy. The value and importance of the teacher must be reappraised and the role given dynamic impetus. "Policies must be directed towards teacher sustenance at a time of retrenchment" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 258).

It is disturbing that the negative stereotype of the teacher commonly characterized through the media, is, in fact, close to the truth. Waller (1932) talked of the "retrogressing personality" of teachers, while Lortie (1975) talks of the profession reinforcing traditional predispositions and conservatism. These characteristics are as much a part of the structure of the profession as they are of the individuals themselves. The literature indicates that many teachers may have become completely frustrated with their jobs.

Teacher behavior conforms to describable behavior, and teachers are eventually socialized into a system. This process begins at teacher training college and continues throughout the teaching career. Three stages in teacher development are generally recognized; the training stage, the first five years, and the remainder of the career. Many forces, both internal and external, lead teachers to make adjustments to their "teaching personality." This development may end in burn-out or, as is the case with many teachers, it may be extended in a professional manner by accumulation of more education (Burke, Christensen, & Fessler, 1982). Unlike other professions, there are few opportunities for career advancement in teaching. Burke et al., (1982) have predicted a stable and stagnant stage when teachers go through the motions of teaching and avoid further professional development. Following this stages is wind-down and exit. In the beginning years on the job, teachers experience a struggle for acceptance from both colleagues and students. In their colleagues they find freedom and solace. At the same time, however, a certain amount of distance due to loyalty to the profession remains between teachers. Teachers become captives of their own profession (Waller, 1932) and it becomes increasingly difficult to get free.

So, how does the American experience compare and contrast with the Irish one?

SUBJECTS

The subjects were enrolled in universities in Ireland and the United States in teacher education programs. Two hundred and thirty-three Irish subjects and 224 subjects in the United States were administered two instruments which measured teacher image. One hundred of the total respondents were male and the rest of the subjects were female. Irish respondents were enrolled in upper level or graduate classes in University College, Dublin, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and from Thromond College in Limerick. All Irish subjects were either teachers or prospective teachers. Subjects from the United States were obtained from undergraduate and graduate teacher education courses at the University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida. The following table describes the study's participants:

Demographics - Teacher Image Study

Characteristics	Irish	USA	Total
Gender			
Male	70	30	100
Female	159	194	353
Age			
18-25	192	81	273
26-35	24	68	92
36-45	6	63	69
46-55	6	9	15
Above 55	1	0	0
Level planning to teach			
Preschool	123	10	133
Elementary	4	146	150
High School	1	24	25
Coll/Univ.	0	8	8
Undecided	76	22	98
Not Teach	27	6	33

INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS

The instruments used in this study consisted of (1) a thirty item attitude scale and (2) a ranking of significant occupations. A written description of the image of teachers was also collected from participants but it is yet to be analyzed.

The attitude scale consisted of items that measured attitude towards teaching as a job and how teaching is perceived by others. The highest possible score was 150. The tables which follow indicate how participants in this study responded to this scale. Significant differences were obtained at the .05 level with the Irish participants rating teaching much lower on the scale used in this study.

Means and Standard Deviations by Category for Means of Total Scores on Teacher Attitude Scale

Category	*N*	*Mean Scores*	*Standard Deviations*
Total	453	102.79	15.53
Males	100	100.87	13.28
Females	353	103.31	16.08
Irish	233	94.63	14.77
USA	220	111.29	11.15
Male/Irish	70	98.71	13.69
Male/USA	30	105.90	10.93
Female/Irish	159	92.55	14.76
Female/USA	194	112.11	10.97

Summary Table of Anova Results for Total Scores on Teaching Attitude Scale

Source of variation	Sum of squares	*DF*	Mean square	*F*
Gender	463.5	1	463.5	2.81*
Ethnic	32129.9	1	32129.9	194.72**
Two-way interaction	2382.3	1	2382.3	14.44***
Residual	74088.44	449	165.0	
Total	109064.10	452	35140.7	

*$p > .0944$
**$p > .0001$
***$p > .0002$

In the second part of the study participants in Ireland (N=233) and in the United States (N=224) were asked to respond to a set of 15 vocations selected from a government published list of 195 national occupations in the United States. The ranks for those occupations for each participating group follow:

Mean Ranks of Social Standing of Occupation
By Ethnic Group -- Irish, N=233, USA, N=224

1=highest social standing, 15=lowest social standing

Occupation	*Ranks*		*P > T*
	Irish	*USA*	
Accountants	5.1	6.1	.0001
Child Care Workers	9.8	11.6	.0001
Clergy	5.6	5.6	.8647*
Doctors	2.5	3.9	.0001
Electricians	10.6	9.3	.0001
Elementary School Teachers	7.1	7.1	.9760*
Lawyers	4.2	4.9	.0388
Military Officers	8.8	6.3	.0001
Nurses	8.2	6.6	.0001
Pharmacists	6.2	7.7	.0001
Restaurant Mngrs	11.2	10.4	.0077
Secondary School Teachers	6.7	9.0	.0001
Secretaries	12.1	10.6	.0001
University/College Professors	5.6	5.9	.2244*
Waiters	13.9	14.4	.0586*

* *Probability of Equality*

CONCLUSIONS

1. Significant differences exist in the way participants in the respective cultures evaluated teaching as measured in this study. It is possible that the context of how one thinks about teaching in the two countries is so different that these types of measurements are ineffective. In this study the Irish sample using the attitude scale scored teaching lower than their counterparts in the United States.

2. When asked to rank professions, elementary teachers ranked about the same in the two samples (7th). Secondary teachers ranked significantly higher in the Ireland (6.7th on the scale of 1st to 15th). The sample of teachers in the United States ranked secondary school teachers 9th out of 15. College teachers were ranked approximately the same (5th and 6th) by the Irish and USA samples. Medical doctors were ranked first in both samples. Waiters were the lowest ranked occupation in both samples (approximately 14th). Other significant differences for occupation rankings included child care workers and secretaries who were ranked significantly higher on the scale by the USA sample.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS FOR IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF TEACHERS

Improving Teacher Image in the Community

1. Know how teaching ranks with other major professions.
2. Be aware of the fact that many teachers may feel that their profession is not as important as others in the society.
3. Since many teachers choose to teach for reasons other than monetary rewards, appealing to those reasons may be a way of improving how teachers feel about their profession.

4. Know that historically the media image of the teacher is mainly negative. Using local media to feature the positive side of the profession will be helpful.
5. University teachers generally have much higher image rankings than secondary or elementary teachers. Involvement with colleges and universities can bring rewards for schools in the community.
6. Joint grants between universities and school-based programs can mean rewards for faculty and for principals.
7. Slight eccentricities, not traditional approaches, produce different faculty images.
8. Principals need to appeal to the feeling and thinking preferences of their faculty as a way of encouraging their professional worth.
9. Human contact with teachers to improve self-esteem must be frequent. Principal movement (daily) within the school and its classrooms can be encouraging to faculty.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Teaching Personality in the United States

What type of person chooses to become a teacher? Studies have consistently shown two profiles: the child-oriented teacher, and the subject-oriented teacher. The latter generally scores higher on standardized tests and tends to be less conforming than the former who prefers the structure of standard operating procedures and working within the strict confines of the career. Research utilizing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) shows that at least within the confines of that instrument, there are clear vocational choices relating to personality within the profession itself. Three out of five elementary school teachers share a similar personality profile, with the majority indicating a preference for sensing, realism, and conformity. These teachers often choose the profession for reasons of security and

safety. *The MBTI clusters are also able to identify the personality of secondary teachers and university professors by department. For example, biology teachers are likely to have similar personality types as are philosophy professors. Subject-oriented teachers are most likely to adopt a dynamic approach to education, and they are also more likely to be attuned to rewards outside of teaching. However, of all the people who choose teaching for a career, most will hold values indicating a concern for people rather than for personal financial success (Dreeban, 1970, p. 158).

The Teaching Role in the United States

A study conducted by Lortie (1964), and replicated by (Kottkamp, Provenzo, Cohn, 1986), indicated that intrinsic and psychic rewards continue to be the major motivating factors in choosing teaching rather than extrinsic rewards such as merit pay. For almost two decades the Gallup Poll has conducted an annual survey on education in America. In January, 1985, most teachers cited their priority goals as teachers are as follows:

(1) to develop good work habits, the ability to concentrate and organize one's thoughts;

(2) to develop the ability to think creatively, objectively, and analytically (Gallup, 1985).

Private school teachers, however, placed greater emphasis than their public school colleagues on another goal--one of ethical principles. The National Center of Education conducted a survey of 1,144 public and 448 private school teachers during 1986, and while both groups cited the development of reasoning and analytical skills as the main purpose of education, private school teachers emphasized the importance of moral values, while public school teachers placed greater emphasis on teaching the practicalities of everyday life (Feistritzer, 1986).

Teachers in Kottkamp's study found their jobs less rewarding than teachers of 20 years ago. Many teachers had lost a source of satisfaction because they were compelled to deal with situations outside the traditional scope of their role. Today's

schools are beleaguered with the social problems of contemporary life. Many teachers are chronically dissatisfied with their work; respect for the profession has declined; and teachers feel they have lost much of the influence they used to exert.

The demise in the status of teachers is documented by the NEA survey *The Status of the American Public School Teacher* (1981). Results showed that the average contemporary public school teacher was older (39), had spent more time in college, was relatively less well paid, and far less likely to choose teaching as a career if given a second chance, than the teacher of 20 years ago.

It seems slightly odd, therefore, that the Gallup Poll should show that parents generally rate teachers favorably (58%) in the face of this adversity (for teaching is not only somewhat socially unattractive but carries a cultural stigma as we shall see). Blue collar respondents rated teachers slightly lower than white collar respondents. The survey showed that parents whose children received good grades rated the teacher more favorably than did parents whose children did not receive good grades.

Cultural Images of teaching in the United States

The cultural image of the American teacher generally does not correspond to the Gallup Poll findings. Jones (in Bass, 1970) studied the public perception of the school teacher in 1957. He listed 11 generalizations frequently made about teachers. The public perceived teachers as being: (1) women; (2) middle class; (3) transmitters of culture; (4) of special moral order; (5) dictatorial; (6) idealistic and/or impractical; (7) reformers; (8) introverted; (9) strangers; (10) involved in a status hierarchy; and (11) attracted to soft jobs.

The image of the teacher preferring the "soft job" keeps recurring. It would seem that an unstratified career like teaching is stigmatized because it does not correspond to the accepted norms of "getting on" in one's career or "rising in the ranks." Indeed it is a cultural paradox that the goals of a teaching career seem to contradict the predominant ones of self-advancement and progress.

It is probably at this juncture that we maygain insight into why the negative stereotype has persisted in American culture. Many of us are familiar with American characters in television programs like "Miss Beadle," "Our Miss Brooks," "Mr. Peepers," and "The Nutty Professor." While humor is often associated with the media image of the teacher, a more negative portrayal shows teachers as inept, stupid, tyrannical, or, sometimes, all three.

The teacher is rarely portrayed as a hero figure in American folklore. Traditionally, learning has been regarded almost as a hindrance to progress; something with little or no intrinsic value. Certainly, this image is most popular with the movie and T.V. serial makers. In *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, one of the summer hit movies of 1986, not only were teachers portrayed poorly, schools were cast as places that perpetuated boredom and student malcontent. Generally, the source of humor in such movies is the victimized student "getting even" with cruel or stupid teachers and with the oppressive system.

Foff (in Bass, 1970) analyzed 62 works of fiction in 1952 and revealed that if fiction can be regarded as a valid measure of social attitudes, teachers are not rated well by the public. Ichabod Crane provides us with a suitable example, as does the more recent rendition of "Our Miss Brooks." Women are often portrayed either as tyrants or as sweet young things waiting for marriage to whisk them off from the rigors of a lifestyle perpetrated outside of the home (see Bass, 1970). English teachers and elocution students, in particular, may remember Miss Fidditch featured in *The Five Clocks* by Martin Joos. She was a terrible, middle-aged spinster: hair in a bun, sensible shoes, and sharp tongue. Correcting others' speech was her most notorious characteristic. Men teachers receive better treatment than women teachers in all cultural portrayals--especially if they are college teachers.

Fortunately, teachers have also been characterized as positive role models. They can be wise, fair, caring, and most important, they can be on the student's side.

Unsung heros who touch the lives of many under adverse circumstances are the idealized educators portrayed in movies such as *Good Morning Miss Dove, To Sir With Love, Goodbye Mr. Chips*, and *Blackboard Jungle* (Edelman, 1983). *Children of a Lesser God* is also a recent movie that is a positive example.

However, the negative stereotype predominates. The persistence of such a stereotype makes the substitution of a more positive image a frustrating task. That substitution is essential if teaching is to become an attractive prospect.

REFERENCES

Bass, A. T. (1970). The teacher as portrayed in fiction. *Contemporary Education, 42*(1), 14-20.

Burke, P. J., Christensen, J. C., & Fessler, R. (1982). *Teacher career stages: Implications for staff development.* (Phi Delta Kappa Fastback Series #214). Bloomington, IN: PDK Educational Foundation.

Cattell, R. B. & Stice, G. F. (1962). I.P.A.T. Classification of Occupations H. M. S. O. *Handbook for 16 P-F Questionnaire.*

Clancy, P., Sheelagh, D., Lynch, K. C., & O'Dowd, L. (1986). *Ireland: A sociological profile.* Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Delahunty, M. C. (1984). An investigation of some personality characteristics two groups of Irish female trainee teachers. *Irish Journal of Psychology, 2.*

Donnelly, N. (1984). *Silver dollar boys* [play]. Produced by Irish National Theatre.

Dowling, P. J. (1935). *Hedge schools of Ireland.* Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press.

Dœeben, R. (1970). *The nature of teaching.* Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman &

Duffy, P. S. (1967). *The lay teacher: A study of the position of the lay teacher in an Irish Catholic environment.* Dublin: Cahill & Co. Ltd.

Dwyer, M. (1986). *Brothers in alarums.* Abbey Theatre [programme]. Dublin: National Theatre Society Ltd.

Edelman, R. (1983). Teachers in the movies. *American Educator, 7*(3), 26-31.

Feistritzer, C. E. (1986). *Profiles of teachers in the United States.* Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information.

Gallup, A. M. (1985). The 17th annual Gallup poll of the public's attitude toward the public schools. *Phi Delta Kappa, 67*(1), 35-47.

Joyce, J. (1916). *Portrait of an artist as a young man.* England: Hazell, Watson, & Viney Ltd.

Keane, M. B. (1978). *Role conception and job satisfaction of teachers in Dublin.* Unpublished master's thesis, University College Dublin, Dubin, Ireland.

Kellaghan, T., Madaus, G. F., Airasian, P. W., & Fontes, P. J. (1981). Opinions of the Irish public on innovations in education. *Irish Journal of Education, 15*(1 & 2), 23-40.

Kelly, S. E. (1970). Teaching in the city: A study of the role of the primary teacher. Dublin: MacMillan.

Kottkamp, . B., Provenzo, Jr., E. F., & Cohn, M. M. (1986). Stability and change in a profession: Two decades of attitudes, 1964-1984. *Phi Delta Kappa, 67*(8), 559-567.

Lanier, J. E. & Little, J. N. (1986). Research on teacher education. In M. C. Whittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: MacMillan.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1983). The lives of teachers. In Lee S. Shulman (Ed.), *Handbook of teaching policy*. New York: Longman.

Lortie, D. C. (1964). *School teacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Madaus, G. F., Fontes, P. J., Kellaghan, T., & Airasian, P. W. (1979). Opinions of the Irish public on the goals and adequacy of education. *Irish Journal of Education, 13*(2), 87-125.

Murphy, C. (1980). *School report*. Dublin: Cahill Printers Ltd.

Myers, I. B. & McCaulley, M. H. (1985). *Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (2nd ed.). Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc.

National Education Association (1981). *The Status of the American Public School Teacher Series*.

Peillon, M. (1982). *Contemporary Irish society*. Dublin: Gill & MacMillan Ltd.

Tarpey, S. (1963). *Personality factors in teacher training selection*. Unpublished master's thesis, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland.

Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Zapata, J. T. (1988). Early identification and recruitment of Hispanic teacher candidates. *Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(1).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special note of appreciation is warranted for the support of the Mary Ball Washington Irish Exchange Program at The University of West Florida. The author wishes to acknowledge research assistants Anne-Marie Armstrong and Declan Patterson for their assistance with the literature review for this study.